DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 734 CS 504 432

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TITLE Speaking Activities and the Pupil.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; *Classroom Techniques; Elementary Education; *Language Arts; *Learning Activities; *Oral Language; Speech Communication; Speech Curriculum; *Speech Instruction; *Speech Skills; Teacher Role; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The ability to communicate content effectively to others is important. Besides using various approaches and techniques to help pupils achieve optimum speaking fluency, language arts teachers must also determine students' present oral communication achievement levels and guide their progress accordingly. Approaches to teaching oral fluency include classroom use of (1) puppets, (2) dramatizations, (3) conversation, (4) discussion, (5) interviews, (6) social introductions, (7) oral reports, (8) oral reading, and (9) direction-giving. (Oral communication objectives and questions concerning the oral communication curriculum are included.) (HTH)

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SPEAKING ACTIVITIES AND THE PUPIL

Marlow Ediger

Being able to communicate content effectively to others is important. Certainly, individuals are at a disadvantage if they cannot make their needs and thoughts known through the use of oral language. Persons with verbal fluency in oral communication have much going in their favor. Generally, they should achieve at a higher level in obtaining and maintaining a desirable job or position as compared to those who communicate ineffectively. Many misunderstandings occur between and among individuals, groups, and nations due to ineffective means of communication. Positive human relations may come about due to proficiency in expressing ideas orally.

The teacher must think of various approaches and techniques to help pupils individually achieve to their optimum in speaking. Furthermore, the teacher needs to determine the present oral communication achievement level of each learner and guide in the direction of achieving continuous optimal progress. Van Allen[1] writes the following involving oral communication:

> The experience of verbalization as well as the verbalization of experience is essential to the education of most human beings. Both require oral interaction within some kind of a language community. When the close language group of a child changes from the home and neighborhood to a classroom setting, the need for verbalization increases, but often the opportunity decreases. The traditional school emphasis on the acquisition of the literacy skills of reading and writing has overshadowed the need for the oracy skills of speaking and listening.

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[1]Roach Van Allen, Language Experiences in Communication. New York: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1976, page 99.

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> Literacy skills and oracy skills enjoy a reciprocal relationship in an educational setting and must be thought of as reinforcing each other. Teachers using a language experience approach do not decide whether reading is more important than speaking or vice versa. They plan for both! They are aware that growth in oral communication is likely to represent growth in reading also.

Using Puppets

Puppets can be used effectively to help pupils progress continuously in speaking. Puppets may be purchased, made by the teacher, or developed by pupils. Depending upon the time available in the classroom setting, pupils with teacher guidance might make sack puppets, stick puppets or sock puppets. Stick puppets and sack puppets basically are relatively easy to make by pupils on any grade level. Pupils, individually or in a committee, may make puppets pertaining to an ongoing unit of study. If pupils, for example, are studying a unit on the farm, a puppet pertaining to a farm animal can be made. Thus, learners creatively may develop speaking parts for farm animals in a group setting. If pupils are pursuing a unit on the factory, puppets can be made pertaining to different workers on an assembly line. Speaking parts also need to be developed for these puppets in order to assist pupils to achieve well in the oral use of language.

In learning activities involving the use of puppets in speaking, the curriculum area of art is stressed. Thus, pupils may be evaluated in developing proficiency in oral communication as well as in revealing creative behavior in art.

Hennings[2] notes the following kinds of puppets which pupils with teacher guidance may utilize:

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[2]Dorothy Grant Hennings, Communication in Action. Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1978, page 144.

- hand-sized paper bags to which features have been added with flo-pens, crayons, construction paper, yarn, or colored pictures clipped from magazines;

- socks, stockings, or white work gloves to which features have been added with buttons, yarn, scraps of material, twine, glitter, tinsel, felt;

- the hand by marking features directly on the fist or the balls of each finger;

- styrofoam or ping pong balls stuck on the ends of the fingers or on the ends of ice cream bar sticks. Again glitter, tinsel, buttons, and yarn form the features of the stick puppets.

Puppets that a puppeteer holds directly over the face can be made from:

- paper plates with features drawn in with crayon and flo-pen, with eyes cut through the plates;

- full-sized paper bags into which eye, nose, and mouth openings have been cut. A fringe of carpet stapled across the top of the bag simulates curly hair, large eyes with long lashes are drawn around the eye openings, and an outwardly projecting nose is stapled above the nose opening. Puppeteers determine locations for eye and nose openings by slipping on their paper bags. This insures a good fit;

- the leg of an old pantyhose slipped onto a wire coat hanger, the large triangle of which has been pulled downward to form a rectangle. The pantyhose is tied top and bottom, perhaps braided at the top to form a pigtail. Features are added to the stretched hose with construction paper and flo-pen.

Body puppets that completely cover the puppeteer can be made from:

- large-sized cartons from which one of the six sides has been removed and through which a head hole has been cut in the opposite side. Cartons can be painted colorfully;

- people-shaped and -sized cutouts. Youngsters stretch out on a piece of heavy grade cardboard while a friend traces the body outline. The youngsters cut out the outline, color themselves in, and hold their puppets in front of them during sharing time.

Using Dramatizations

Dramatic activities can help pupils progress in the oral use of language. Creative dramatics needs to be emphasized much in teaching-learning situations pertaining to different units of study. In a learning activitiy involving creative dramatics, pupils spontaneously develop speaking parts as the need arises. If pupils on the first grade level have listened to or have read the story, "Goldilocks and the Three Bears," they might dramatize this story using spontaneous oral language. Pupils may volunteer to play selected roles in the dramatic activity. At other times, the teacher could appoint individual pupils in playing diverse roles in the dramatization.

Dramatic activities help pupils in attaching meaning to what has been learned. Learnings then become more lifelike and real. Pupils can feel and think like the individual whose role is being played. Teacher-pupil planning may be utilized in evaluating learner achievement in dramatic activities. Evaluation procedures used should not hinder creative endeavors of pupils. Nor, should evaluation destroy pupil enjoyment of creative dramatics.

Dramatic activities may be used on any grade level in the elementary school and in many units of study. If fifth grade pupils, for example, are studying a unit on the Middle East, they may wish to dramatize scenes pertaining to bedouin life. Much research generally needs to be conducted by pupils using a variety of reference sources dealing with bedouin culture prior to, during, and after the dramatization. Thus, pupils could be spurred on to greater effort in learning when using dramatic activities.

Formal dramatizations might also be utilized in the elementary school. Play parts may then be written by pupils with teacher guidance. The parts are

written prior to their use in formal dramatizations. Following the writing of diverse roles of characters in the play, pupils may then practice reading the parts. The final presentation may be presented to peers and to pupils in other classrooms. Background scenery can be developed as the need arises. If learners desire, they may memorize individual play parts rather than reading it orally. Polished performances of the play are not necessary. The formal dramatization should assist pupils to improve in and enjoy being involved in diverse oral communication experiences.

Using Conversation

It is important that pupils develop needed skills in conversation. Conversation is the most frequently used means of oral communication. Pupils need to become proficient in conversation. Friendships may be developed on the basis of individuals being able to converse well with others. An interesting conversationalist is generally in demand in terms of using one's leisure time well. Rubin[3] writes the following:

> Socialization is a process that prepares an individual to live in society. Human beings are social animals. The better we know one another, the better we are able to get along with one another. It is through social discourse such as conversation that we learn more about our friends and neighbors and, many times, about ourselves as well. The need to converse with one another is seen daily in any classroom, whether it is a university graduate class or a kindergarten. When an instructor is interrupted during a class period and must stop to talk to a visitor or leave the class for a short while, what happens? Practically anyone can predict the students' behavior in this situation. They start talking to one another.

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[3]Dorothy Rubin, Teaching Elementary Language Arts. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980, page 76.

> No prompting is necessary, sometimes to the dismay of the teacher. Children naturally like to talk, to exchange pleasantries, ideas, comments, and so on. The teacher must understand this need in students and provide not only an environment where students will feel free to engage in spontaneous, informal, and nonstructured talks with one another but also provide time for this to take place.
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> Since children as well as adults spend most of their time in conversational oral discourse, teachers should help students to be more adept at this skill. Being a good conversationalist helps individuals to be freer to communicate with others and thus plays a large role in enhancing self-concept.

In being a good conversationalist, pupils must inwardly consider the following criteria:

1. much background information is needed.
2. individuals must be interested in and like other people.
3. an adequate self-concept is necessary in being able to communicate ideas with confidence.
4. thoughts must be communicated on the present understanding level of listeners.
5. proper voice inflection is needed when conversing with others.
6. the skilled use of language is important.
7. a good conversationalist needs to have a large speaking vocabulary.
8. proper sequence of ideas is important.
9. nonverbal communication must be stressed when ideas are communicated orally.

The teacher should have pupils practice conversation skills during the school day. Certainly, this is using time wisely in the elementary school, since conversation may be the most frequently used speaking activity used by individuals. Time should be given by the teacher, if at all possible, to

converse with pupils before the school day begins as well as when it ends. Pupils may also practice conversation skills in the school cafeteria during lunch time.

Using Discussions

Participating in discussions is a frequent type of speaking activity for most individuals. In group situations in society, participants engage in discussing problem areas. Possible solutions to identified problems are then discussed. There certainly are many problems that individuals in society may discuss with others. Also, in the classroom setting, pupils with teacher supervision should discuss relevant problems on the appropriate developmental level of participants. What are some possible relevant problems that individuals in society and learners in school might discuss?

1. How can an adequate supply of energy to meet the needs of consumers domestically, be acquired?
2. How might wars be minimized or eliminated in diverse areas of the world?
3. How may individuals from minority groups get their fair share of the good things in life?
4. How can an equitable system of taxation be developed?
5. How should candidates for public office be selected?
6. How should campaigns for office be financed?
7. What can be done to cut down on crime locally, as well as nationally?
8. Which are the better approaches available to rehabilitate those arrested and convicted of crimes?
9. How can inflation be curbed to a reasonable degree?

10. What can be done to establish full employment?

11. How can welfare recipients best be assisted in society?

Once problems have been identified, solutions need to be discussed. In the school setting, pupils need to pursue research activities on their developmental level. Background information obtained is used in discussion situations. Solutions to problems should be tentative with possible modifications made as evidence indicates.

There are flexible guidelines developed through teacher-pupil planning which might be used in assessing progress in discussions. These guidelines, among others, may include the following:

1. participators in a discussion should not digress from the topic being considered.
2. each member in a committee should participate in the discussion. Otherwise, solutions to problems may not represent the thinking of the group.
3. effective and clear communication of ideas is important if the discussion is to progress.
4. the chairperson and participants in the discussion must respect the thinking of others.
5. ideas that are not clear need to be clarified in the discussion.
6. discussants must have much background information to be a good member of a discussion group.
7. ideas presented should be evaluated critically in an atmosphere of respect.
8. creative ideas need to be encouraged in ongoing discussion groups.

Anderson and Lapp[4] enumerate the following possibilities for discussion in the children's literature curriculum:

1. Character. What are the clues to characters suggested in the writing? From what is said or the action taken, what inference can be made about the individual? Why does the character act the way he does? What are his values? Did anyone change in the story? Why?

2. Setting. Can you see where the story is happening? How do those in the story act because of the setting? Is there a basic struggle between the people in the story and the nature of the place where they live?

3. Mood--feeling--tone. What words are used to tell you how the writer feels? What is the tone of voice of the storyteller? Is it serious? Humorous? Is this a true experience?

4. Story pattern. What story would you tell if you had only the first paragraph to guide you? Can you tell what happened by reading only the last paragraph? Is there a theme or lesson that the writer is illustrating? Who is telling the story? What difference does it make?

Using Interviews

Many individuals engage in interviewing others in getting needed information, as well as to explore interests in a variety of topics. It is important for pupils to develop relevant understandings, skills, and attitudinal objectives pertaining to interviewing others. Which important flexible criteria may be developed through teacher-pupil planning and used in assessing achievement in conducting interviews?

1. Pupils must have adequate background knowledge on their level of

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[4]Paul S. Anderson and Diane Lapp, Language Skills in Elementary Education. Third Edition. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1979, page 296.

development to conduct an interview.

2. Respect for others is important when conducting an interview. Ideas need to be clearly communicated.
3. Questions must be carefully developed prior to conducting an interview.
4. It may be necessary to record information obtained during the interview.
5. The interviewer must be a good listener to comprehend information.
6. The interview must be initiated as well as culminated in a way satisfying to both the interviewer and the individual being interviewed.
7. Following the interview, data gathered need to be evaluated, summarized and written.

Pupils with teacher guidance may evaluate if these guidelines or standards have been achieved. If they have not been achieved, pupils should be guided in determining reasons. Perhaps, the standards should be modified or revised as the need arises.

Making Introductions

In society, it is important that individuals learn appropriate methods of making introductions. Visitors must be introduced to others so that feelings of belonging and security result. No one desires to be left out of social situations involving conversation or discussions. Pupils need to develop skills to help visitors feel comfortable and wanted in social situations. Creative ways need devising in assisting pupils to achieve relevant objectives pertaining to the making of introductions. The following guidelines, among others, are important to stress in teaching-learning situations involving the

making of introductions:

1. Politeness is of utmost importance.
2. A satisfying way should be devised when introducing one person to another individual or group.
3. Names should be pronounced clearly in the making of introductions.
4. Information about each person being introduced should accompany introductions being made.
5. The introducer should guide those being introduced in following the introduction through with satisfying conversation. Introductions made should be followed with conversation.
6. Consideration for others is important in the making of and following through with the introducing process.

Using Oral Reports

Oral reports presented by pupils to the class can do much in helping develop proficiency in speaking. Reports given might relate to ongoing units of study from diverse curriculum areas. Learners should perceive knowledge as being related rather than isolated. For example, if pupils are studying a unit on the changing surface of the earth in science, pupils may volunteer to report on topics such as the following:

1. erosion.
2. volcanoes.
3. folding.
4. faults.
5. magma.
6. lava.

There are many skills that can be developed during the time that reports are being developed. The following skills are important:

1. reading for a variety of purposes.

2. note taking over content read.

3. outlining content in terms of organization.

4. using various reference sources.

5. utilizing the card catalog.

6. the mechanics of writing such as spelling, capitalization, punctuation, usage, and handwriting.

7. organizing content in the report to present to listeners.

Pupils should be guided in achieving desired standards when giving oral reports. These standards might well include the following:

1. Visual aids are used in presenting the report.

2. Ideas are clearly presented to listeners.

3. Order of ideas presented is appropriate.

4. Main ideas rather than isolated facts are inherent in the report.

5. A pleasant speaking voice is used.

6. Content in the report is adequately researched.

7. Peers are listening carefully to the report.

8. Main ideas presented are supported by facts.

These standards need to be considered in terms of each pupil's present achievement level. Excessively difficult goals definitely should not be the experience of any individual pupil. Nor, should objectives exist for pupils where little or no challenge is presented for learning. Objectives must be adjusted to the present achievement level of each pupil with new learnings being developed in proper sequence from the child's own unique perception. Good attitudes toward learnings may then be developed. Positive attitudes toward learning will guide pupils in achieving desired goals in speaking. Attainable goals only, should be stated for each individual pupil. Learning

activities can then be selected in guiding pupils to achieve desired objectives.

The pupil needs to have ample opportunities to assess personal achievement after having presented an oral report. This must be done in an atmosphere of respecting the self. The pupil can listen to his/her own recorded voice to evaluate sequential progress. Previous recordings might be compared with later recordings. The teacher serves as a guide in helping pupils to achieve well in oral communication.

Using Oral Reading

Pupils should have ample opportunities to develop proficiency in oral reading. Pupils need to develop competency in presenting ideas to others through oral reading. Learners should have ample opportunities to listen individually to recordings of their very own oral reading. Pupils individually may work in the direction of improving oral reading by listening to recordings of earlier attempts in oral reading and making comparisons with later attempts. In guiding pupils to achieve in oral reading, the following guidelines might well be followed:

1. Learners should practice reading a given selection before it is read orally to others in the class setting.
2. Guidance must be given to pupils in using proper stress, pitch, and juncture in oral reading.
3. Content must be communicated accurately to listeners.
4. Self-evaluation, as well as group evaluation, of achievement in oral reading is important.
5. Each pupil should be evaluated in terms of his own unique present

possible achievement.

6. Each pupil needs to be guided to make continuous progress in oral reading.
7. Oral reading should be an enjoyable learning activity for pupils.

It is important for pupils to become proficient in oral reading to be able to communicate ideas effectively to others.

Giving and Following Directions

Very often, individuals are asked by guests to give directions in going from one place to another. Pupils need to develop proficiency in the giving of directions. They must then become familiar with important local landmarks. Learners should have much practice in directing individuals to specific places and points of interest. The child's home or school can be the reference point from which directions are given initially. Later, other reference points may be utilized so that learners develop flexibility in thinking pertaining to the giving of directions.

Teacher-pupil planning might be used in determining which landmarks would be relevant in a given community. The following, among others, may be important places or areas in a given community:

1. parks and school buildings.
2. selected stores and offices.
3. major highways and streets.
4. museums and libraries.
5. the train depot and airport.
6. important bus stops.
7. selected churches and governmental buildings.

As the need arises, additional landmarks can be identified. The pupil on the appropriate developmental level should practice giving directions to others in the class setting pertaining to going from the local school to an important place in the community. Learners may also give directions to a classmate so that the latter may locate an object in the classroom or on the school ground.

In learning to follow directions, pupils at a learning center in the class setting may pursue the following activities:

1. make a relief map.
2. develop a diorama.
3. work a written exercise.
4. complete a test.
5. make a model plane or car.
6. develop a selected dish of food.
7. learn to play a game.
8. make a simple musical instrument.
9. develop a set of directions for others to locate a specific object.
10. perform a folk dance.

Pupils must learn to give directions clearly and accurately. A learning center pertaining to activities in the giving of directions should prove helpful to pupils. Teacher-pupil planning may be utilized in developing tasks for the learning center.

In Summary

There are numerous speaking activities in which pupils should become proficient. These include the using of puppets, dramatizations, conversation,

discussion, interviews, introductions, oral reports, oral reading, and the giving of directions. Teachers must accept pupils where they are presently in achievement and give guidance in helping learners to make continuous progress in oral communication. Greene and Petty[5] present the following objectives in oral communication which provide criteria against which learners progress may be evaluated:

1. To converse with classmates and adults easily and courteously.
2. To participate in discussions, sticking to the point and respecting the opinions of others.
3. To organize information and report it effectively.
4. To plan an interview and carry it through courteously and effectively.
5. To use the telephone competently.
6. To conduct a meeting by means of parliamentary procedures.
7. To give clear directions, explanations, and announcements orally.
8. To tell a story or personal experience effectively and interestingly.
9. To greet others properly in various social situations.
10. To participate in choral speaking.
11. To make use of parliamentary procedures as a member of a group.
12. To take part in a dramatic activity.

Questions for Thought

1. What can be done to aid learners in making continuous progress in oral communication?

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[5]Harry A. Greene and Walter T. Petty, Developing Language Skills in the Elementary Schools. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1975, page 172.

2. What difficulties have you observed that pupils exhibit in the oral use of language?
3. Which general objectives do you think teachers should emphasize when developing proficiency within pupils for speaking?
4. Which kinds of speaking activities, do you think, pupils enjoy most? Why?
5. How would you proceed using teacher-pupil planning in developing objectives for pupils to achieve in oral communication?
6. Consult several city school curriculum guides to determine which objectives in oral communication are stressed most frequently.

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